

A SHORT HISTORY

OF

Methodism in the United States,

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH,

BY

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MACON, GEORGIA:

J. W. BURKE & CO., PRINTERS AND BINDERS.

1884.

PREFATORY NOTE.

The design of this little work is to supply the masses of Methodists with information touching the origin, growth and success of Methodism in the United States. So far as the author knows, there is no book now occupying the place this volume is intended to fill. Other and more expensive books on Methodist History have been and will be written. This volume is the rival of none of those. The writer seeks to put within the reach of every Methodist a brief account of the men who, surmounting all obstacles, laid the foundations of that marvelous system for furnishing the people with the gospel, whose rapid growth and present magnitude are the wonder of two centuries and of two continents.

Unless the author is greatly mistaken, the reading of the heroic labors and thrilling incidents in the lives of the Pioneers of Methodism in the New World recorded in these pages will beget in the heart of every Methodist a deeper, holier love for the Church that now marks the one hundredth year of its organic existence.

THE AUTHOR.

ELBERTON, GA., March 1st, 1884.

METHODISM IN THE UNITED STATES.

CHAPTER I.



OWARD the latter part of the Seventeenth Century Louis XIV., the bigoted Catholic Emperor of France, inaugurated a system of religious persecution which drove hundreds of his Protestant subjects from their homes, in the Palatine on the Rhine, into exile. Many of them made their way to England, whence some fifty families emigrated to Ireland and settled near Rathkeale, in the County of Limerick. A lack of pastoral oversight for nearly fifty years had reduced this colony to a deplorable state of immorality. They were noted, even in Ireland, for their "drunkenness, profanity, and utter neglect of religion." In the year 1758 Mr. Wesley visited Limerick, and found "these poor strangers," as he calls them, "a reformed, a devout people." His own preachers had penetrated into this region of darkness, and preached unto them the pure word of God.

"In the spring of 1760," says a writer in the *Irish Evangelist*, "a group of emigrants might have been seen at the Custom House quay, Limerick, preparing to embark for America. They were accompanied to the vessel's side by crowds of their companions and friends, some of whom had come sixteen miles to say 'farewell' for the last time. One of those about to leave—a young man with a thoughtful look and resolute bearing—is evidently the leader of the party. He had been one of the first fruits of his countrymen to

Christ, had been the leader of the infant Church, and in their humble chapel had often ministered to them the word of life. He is surrounded by his spiritual children and friends, who are anxious to have some parting words of counsel and instruction. He enters the vessel, and from its side once more breaks among them the 'bread of life.' Parting words are spoken, and the vessel sets sail for New York, where it arrives safely, August 10, 1760. Who among the crowd, that saw the first band of Christian emigrants leave the Irish shore, could have thought that two of this little company were destined, in the mysterious providence of God, to influence for good countless thousands, and that their names should live as long as the sun and moon endure? Yet so it was. "That vessel contained Philip Embury, the first class-leader and local preacher of Methodism on the American Continent, and Barbara Heck, a mother in Israel, one of its first members," the germ from which has sprung Episcopal Methodism in the United States.

When Embury landed in New York, there were, in what is now the United States, about two millions of inhabitants, including blacks, composed of English, Irish, and German, and increasing at the rate of one hundred per cent. in thirty years; many, perhaps the majority of them, were migratory in their natures, every few years moving to a different section, seeking thereby to improve their social relations and temporal fortunes. A Church with a settled pastorate, without the life and power of religion, was not adapted to such conditions, nor could it meet the spiritual demands of such a people. What they needed was a Church with a ministry whose head-quarters were in the saddle. Methodism, with its itinerancy, was the only system for supplying the masses with the gospel, known to the religious world, that was equal to this exigency. Its polity was exactly suited to the wants of a pioneer population. With the holy fire, the quenchless zeal, and the de-

voted piety of its membership and its ministry, it is recognized to-day as one of the most powerful elements in the religious and material prosperity of the United States. And yet Methodism, in its doctrines, presented no new dogmatical phase of Protestantism. Justification, which it emphasized, and still emphasises, was "the prominent doctrine of the Reformation. Its doctrines of the witness of the Spirit and of sanctification had been received substantially by all the leading Churches of Christendom." The Anglican Church authorized every doctrine taught by Wesley, excepting, possibly, Arminianism, and even that "prevailed in the English Church under the Stuarts." The necessity for Methodism in the United States appears, therefore, from two considerations, namely: (1) It found a form of religion, but destitute of power; it found a shadow, but there was little substance; it found a body, but life was either extinct or told of its presence by a feeble and constantly weakening pulse. (2) The other Churches possessed no aggressive power, and hence could not reach the masses. Methodism aroused these Churches to greater activity by infusing into them its own spirit and life, while through its sturdy, self-denying ministers it carried the gospel to the very outposts of civilization. Such was the system of religion which these two emigrants, Philip Embury and Barbara Heck, were to plant in the New World.

The history of this wonderful movement would be incomplete, as well as inaccurate, if the place and work of one of Wesley's earliest co-laborers should be ignored. George Whitefield, reared in humble circumstances, was a devout student at Oxford, where he was converted in early manhood. The moral condition of the English masses distressed his ardent soul. Ordained an elder in the Established Church, he was soon shut out from its pulpits because of his field-preaching, and his earnest advocacy of a conscious

knowledge of pardoned sins. So great were the crowds that flocked to his ministry that no houses could be found large enough to hold them. Whitefield overleaped all custom and propriety, and proclaimed the gospel to listening thousands from door-steps and windows and tables, converted into temporary pulpits, in the open fields—wherever the people gathered together he broke to them the bread of life. Fired with the missionary spirit, he crossed the Atlantic thirteen times. Much of his time he spent in North America. From Savannah to Boston, and back again, he went like a flaming torch, preaching with an eloquence and power far surpassing anything the colonies had ever heard or witnessed before. His fame ran ahead of him and spread through all the country around. Men came forty and fifty miles to hear this wonderful evangelist. His preaching was attended with those remarkable physical phenomena, which have alike filled the unlearned with superstitious dread and compelled the notice, if not the wonder, of the more enlightened. As yet these exhibitions have received no satisfactory explanation. The “great awakening” under Jonathan Edwards had not only subsided, but it had reacted. Whitefield’s fervid preaching restored it. “The New England Churches received, under his labors, an inspiration of zeal and energy which has never died out.” In Pennsylvania and New Jersey he was received as a prophet from God, and it was there that the Presbyterian Church assumed an attitude of evangelical power and aggression which have marked its subsequent history. The reading of Whitefield’s printed sermons led to the founding of the Presbyterian Church in Virginia, whence it has extended to the South and South-west. “The stock from which the Baptists of Virginia, and those in all the South and South-west have sprung, was Whitefieldism.” The man who afterward founded the Free-will Baptist Church, was converted under Whitefield’s preaching.

Whitefield was the pioneer of Methodism in the United States. He blazed the way for Wesley's itinerants through this wilderness. The relation he sustains to American Methodism is somewhat similar to that of John the Baptist to Christ—the people were prepared to receive the preachers sent out by Mr. Wesley to the New World with eager interest, if not with a hearty welcome. This tireless evangelist allowed himself no rest. He preached almost daily, sometimes oftener, up to the day of his death. He could not fill half the appointments the people desired to make for him. Though not yet three score years old, his once robust frame was bent with the weight of incessant toil. Besides he had long been a sufferer from asthma. He was now on his last journey. Passing through Philadelphia and New York, he preached every day to larger congregations than ever. His great soul swells with a longing desire to do good, as he writes, "O what new scenes of usefulness are opening in various points of this world." From New York he went to Boston, thence to Newbury. His last sermon in the open air was at Exeter. "It was," says a historian, "an effort of stupendous eloquence—his last field triumph." He departed the same day for Newburyport, where it was expected he would preach on the morrow. The people gathered in crowds in front of the house where he was stopping. He was tired and worn by sickness and travel, and said he could not preach. Taking his candle he started to his room, but stopped on the stairway by the suggestion of his own generous heart that he ought not thus to desert the anxious multitude. Standing thus, he continued to address the people until his candle had burned into the socket.

This was his last sermon. Ere the sun had opened the gates of the new day the flaming spirit of George Whitefield had winged its way from the labors of earth to the rest of heaven. His bones, from which the flesh has long

since mouldered into dust, can be seen by the devout pilgrim as they lie in an open coffin beneath the pulpit of Federal Street Church, Newburyport. Whitefield is best known for his wonderful eloquence, but in the annals of eternity, doubtless, his devoted piety is recorded in indelible characters.

Let us return to the father and mother of Methodism in America. Philip Embury was born in 1728. He received such education as the country at that time afforded. Fragments of his writings which still remain show that his penmanship was almost faultless. One of these contains the following important record: "On Christmas day, being Monday, the 25th of December, in the year 1752, the Lord shone into my soul by a glimpse of redeeming love, being an earnest of redemption in Christ Jesus, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

He was licensed by Wesley as a local preacher, and ministered in this capacity to his neighbors until he emigrated to America.

In 1765, and, possibly, for some years before, it seems that he had ceased to preach altogether. Late in this year another vessel arrived in New York, bringing over Paul Ruckle, Jacob Heck and a few others. Mrs. Barbara Heck visited them frequently, as Paul Ruckle was her eldest brother. On one of these occasions she found some of the party engaged in a game of cards. Her spirit was aroused within her; seizing the cards, she cast them into the fire. Leaving the company, she went immediately to the home of Embury, who was her cousin, and, by her earnest pleading, so far overcame his objections that he consented to preach. She collected four persons, who, with herself, constituted his audience. After preaching, he enrolled them in a class—the first in America. It would be interesting, if we knew them, to dwell upon the names of those who composed this class—the germ of American Methodism.

Embury continued to meet the class every week. The little company soon grew too large for Embury's house, and they hired a more commodious room. In a few months there were two classes. These meetings produced no little excitement in the city, and they were thronged with spectators. Three musicians belonging to a regiment were converted and became exhorters. The interest reached the Alms-house; Embury was invited to preach. Soon the Superintendent and several inmates were recorded among the converts. Thus American like European Methodism began among the poorer classes. From then till now it has verified the declaration of the Master—"To the poor the gospel is preached."

In 1769 or 1770, Embury moved from New York to Camden, Washington county, New York, where he continued to labor as a local preacher for a few years.

In 1775, he received an injury while mowing in his field from the effects of which he soon died, aged forty-five—greatly beloved and highly esteemed by his neighbors. And thus the curtain falls never again to be lifted until the open books shall reveal the far-reaching effects of the labors of this humble toiler in the vineyard of the Lord.

In 1767, the little company in Embury's house were agitated "by the appearance of a stranger in their midst clad in military uniform and girt with a sword." Their excitement was soon allayed by the devout attitude of the soldier. At the conclusion of the services he introduced himself as Captain Thomas Webb, of the King's service; likewise as a soldier and subject of the King of kings. Webb was a gallant soldier and devout Christian. His benign face betokened the brave, generous spirit of the true man. His blazing eye (he had lost one in the service of his country) told of a nature resistless as a torrent when kindled with the fire of holy zeal. And there was, too, so much of kind-

ness and tenderness in his bearing, we are not surprised that he was a favorite wherever he went.

Webb heard Mr. Wesley preach in Bristol and joined the Methodists in 1765. Entering a Methodist congregation at Bath that had no preacher, he addressed them with great effect. Wesley licensed him to preach, and ever after in the New World and in the Old he was indefatigable in labors—preaching the gospel, founding societies and visiting hospitals and prisons—all the while giving away his money with an open hand. Wesley greatly admired him for his courage and military discipline, and in his journals records many things eulogistic of the brave Captain. He preached, as did all of Wesley's itinerants, wherever a congregation could be brought together, whether in a house, out of doors, or in the field. His preaching in the street at Winchester was blessed in a way even Wesley had not expected. A number of soldiers—a class who always went to hear Webb preach—were present. Some of them were converted. Afterward their regiment was sent to the Norman Isles. These wrote to Wesley for a preacher. Robert Brackenbury was sent, and, later, Adam Clarke, and thus Methodism was founded in the Channel Islands, where it has flourished ever since.

John Adams, afterward President of the United States, said that Webb was one of the most eloquent men he ever heard. Contemporary writers on Methodism say that "he experienced much of the power of religion, and that he was favored with those communications from above which made him bold to declare the whole counsel of God."

Such was Thomas Webb who startled the little assembly at Embury's house by his sudden appearance. Hearing of the society at New York, he hastened hither from Albany to encourage them by his presence and support. He and Embury rented a rigging loft, eighteen by sixty feet, which became too small to accommodate the crowds that came to

hear the word of life. Barbara Heck, anticipating this emergency, had devised a plan for building a chapel, which was approved by the society. Webb entered into the movement enthusiastically, and subscribed thirty pounds. He was likewise one of the original trustees. An appeal was made successfully to the citizens of New York. The house was forty-two by sixty feet, and was built of stone. Dissenters were not yet allowed to build regular Churches, and hence, to avoid any legal difficulty, the building was provided with a fire-place and chimney. The house was dedicated by Embury, October 30, 1768. Thus was founded John Street Church—the first house of worship erected by Methodism on the American continent. I make no apology for devoting this short space to this monumental building. Around this historic edifice gathers enough of importance to fasten upon the memory of every lover of Methodism the circumstances that gave rise to its inception, as well as the names of the movers in its erection.

Webb being now on the retired list, with the title and pay of a Captain, was free to itinerate when and where he pleased. He continued to preach with untiring zeal and marvelous power; the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant being alike awakened under his ministry. When a capitalist was converted, his inquiry was: "Is his pocket-book converted?" He founded Methodism in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Long Island, and Delaware. Through his earnest appeals by letter to Mr. Wesley for more preachers, Pilmoor and Boardman were sent over to America. Not long afterward he crossed the Atlantic, and appearing in person before the Conference at Leeds urgently called for more laborers. Rankin and Shadford responded and returned with him to the United States. He continued for many years to preach both in England and America, still founding Churches, organizing societies, and giving his money with a lavish hand to the Church and to

the poor, and scattering the precious seeds of gospel truth wherever he went. He died December 21st, 1796, full of years and faithful service, and was buried at Bristol. A marble monument to his memory has this inscription : "Brave, active, courageous—faithful, zealous, successful." His devoted piety, his untiring zeal, and his unstinted liberality have endeared him to the hearts of Methodists for all time.

About the year 1764 Robert Strawbridge, an ardent Methodist Irishman, with his wife emigrated to America and settled in Frederick county, Maryland. He opened his house for preaching, formed a society, and not long thereafter built the famous "log meeting house" on Sam's Creek—a structure twenty-two feet square, without windows, door or floor. He became a practical itinerant on his own responsibility, preaching in Eastern Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Delaware. His rude, fervid eloquence drew crowds of the rustic population to hear him, and his ministry was attended with much of the physical effects that characterized the preaching of that day. Hundreds were converted and organized into societies. He founded Methodism in Baltimore and Harford counties. In the former, was converted under his preaching, Richard Owen—the first native Methodist preacher on this continent. Owen served the Church faithfully for many years as a local preacher; he finally entered the itinerancy, and died in it. William Watters, a contemporary, writes of him : "Though encumbered with a large family, he often left wife and children and went into distant parts, and freely published to others that gospel which was the power of God unto his own salvation. He was ever ready to fill up a gap where there were no itinerants, and by continuing to go into neighborhoods where there was no preaching, opened the way for forming new circuits."

No more earnest, zealous, successful laborer appears

among the early itinerants than Strawbridge. His preaching was eminently blessed of the Lord ; through it not a few were brought to Christ who afterward became devoted itinerants. In after years, when he became a regular itinerant, possibly he was a little restive under the military discipline of Asbury and Rankin, and demanded for himself somewhat more liberty in administering the sacraments than was accorded American preachers by the instructions of Mr. Wesley. And when, under the advice of Mr. Wesley, these preachers refrained from administering the sacraments, an exception was made in the case of Strawbridge on account of his eminent services to the Church.

Many anecdotes, in connection with his preaching, are related by contemporory historians. He was preaching on one occasion, and a gentleman present thought the sermon was directed at him. After service he went home in disgust. However, as is generally the case, he decided to give him another hearing, and hid himself for the purpose behind the door. The preacher took for his text—"And a man shall be as a hiding-place," etc. In the midst of his sermon he cried out: "Sinner, come from your scouting-hole." The poor fellow came out, and looking the preacher in the face, said: "You are a wizard, and the devil is in you ; I will hear you no more." Strawbridge served the struggling Church faithfully, if not with distinguished success. He died in peace in 1781, and was buried in sight of Baltimore. Asbury never forgave him for his position in the sacramental controversy, still believing, however, in the goodness of his heart ; but allusions to him in contemporory records represent him as a man of apostolic zeal and tireless labors in the service of the Church.

The work was now spreading rapidly ; the society at John Street wrote Mr. Wesley for more preachers—men whose "heart and soul" were in the work. Among those sent out was Robert Williams, who applied to Wesley for

authority to preach in America. Full of zeal he soon reached the Western Continent and became the founder of Methodism in Virginia, introducing himself and his mission by preaching from the steps of the Court-house in Norfolk. He was a plain, earnest, useful preacher. Says Jarrett, a Catholic minister of the establishment: "He was greatly blessed in detecting hypocrites, razing false foundations, and in stirring up believers, to press after a present salvation from the remains of sin." Under his ministry Luther Lee, the apostle of Methodism in New England, was converted. Lee says that his parents opened their house for the Methodist itinerants to preach in ; they were both converted, and two of their sons became ministers of the gospel. Williams extended his itinerant movements southward, and became the founder of Methodism in North Carolina, also. He married, located, and died not far from Norfolk, in 1775. Asbury says of him that " he was a useful, laborious man. Perhaps no one in America has been an instrument of awakening so many souls as God has awakened by him."

CHAPTER II.



N the 3rd of August, 1769, in the Conference at Leeds, Mr. Wesley said from the chair: "We have a pressing call from our brethren of New York to come over and help them. Who is willing to go?" A trip across the Atlantic to the New World was not more romantic than perilous, and these preachers were in no great hurry to respond to the call. The next day, after an earnest sermon from Mr. Wesley, Richard Boardman, and Joseph Pilmoor reported for the work in America. Boardman was now thirty-one years old, vigorous and full of zeal. He had been itinerating six years. Wesley pronounced him a pious, good-natured, sensible man. He was one of Asbury's most ardent supporters and faithful collaborators. His hard life in England had prepared him for frontier work in America. He was to embark at Bristol. On his way he preached when he stopped for the night. In the company was a young woman eagerly listening to the sermon from the text—"Jabez was more honorable than his brethren," etc. Under the sermon light broke upon her soul, and she rejoiced in her Lord. Some ten years thereafter she was married to William Bunting, and became the mother of Jabez Bunting, for many years the leader of British Methodism.

Pilmoor was converted at sixteen, educated in Wesley's Kingswood school, and had been preaching four years. The two evangelists reached Philadelphia October 24, 1769, and began their mission immediately. Pilmoor preached from the steps of the State House, and from the platform of the judge's stand at the race-course. He found the people eager to hear the gospel, coming together in crowds of four and five thousand. In a letter to Wesley he thanks God for field-preaching. Boardman was appointed

by Mr. Wesley, his “superintendent” in America—the first, as far as I have discovered, who bore that title and filled that important position. The appointment of a superintendent meant annual conferences, such as Mr. Wesley had in England, and the distribution of the preachers to their fields of labor. This was really the beginning of that plan of systematic itinerancy which culminated in 1784, in the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Boardman preached in the city of Philadelphia to a great number of people. Going northward, he preached on the route to a large company who had suddenly come together in the Presbyterian Church, at the ringing of the bell—such was the curiosity to hear a Methodist evangelist. He hastened on to New York, where the brethren received him with open arms, and he began his mission in John Street Church. To such proportions had this movement grown, that in the latter part of this year he wrote to Wesley that “our house contains about seventeen hundred people,” and yet only “about one-third get in.” “There appears,” he continues, “such a willingness among the Americans to hear the word as I never saw before.” In April, 1771, he again writes: “It pleases God to carry on his work among us. Within this month we have had a great awakening here, and near thirty have joined the society.” He preached in Baltimore and Boston, forming a small society in the latter place, which seems, however, to have soon broken up, as there is no account of its existence when Jesse Lee visited Boston, nearly a quarter of a century afterward. His labors were eminently successful in Philadelphia, also. Between New York and Philadelphia, it seems that Boardman and Pilmoor exchanged about three times every year for four years. The preaching of Pilmoor was attended with like success. Writing to Wesley he records a fact which sounds strange to modern ears: “The religion of

Jesus is a favorite topic in New York. Many of the gay and polite speak much about grace and perseverance." He calls for more men, as "there is enough work in each city for two men." He sallies forth into the neighboring towns as opportunity offers. Finding a small company gathered for worship at a private house, he was forbidden to preach by a clergyman. The sick wife of the owner of the house, lying in an adjacent room, saw him through the open door. She had dreamed that she was lost in a dismal swamp, and when ready to sink down with fatigue into despair, a stranger appeared with a light, and led her out of the wilderness. She now identified Pilmoor with the stranger in her dream, and appealed to him to preach to her and the company. During the sermon she was happily converted. He journeyed southward as far as Charleston and Savannah, scattering the precious seed of gospel truth along his route.

At the outbreak of the Revolution, on account of his sympathies with the royalists' cause, Pilmoor returned to England, and remained there until peace was established. He afterward came back to the United States, accepted a call to an Episcopal Church, and died in the early part of the present century.

Boardman returned with Pilmoor to England, and immediately resumed his ministerial labors. He died at Cork, in 1782.

The little company of saints in the New World still called for help. Mr. Wesley could not resist the appeal. Five responded, but only two could be spared from the home field, so rapidly had the work spread in England and Ireland. One of these, who reported themselves ready to face the perils of the Atlantic, was Francis Asbury, a man who was destined to be the leader of the Methodist hosts in America for nearly a half century. We may well pause and take a look at this remarkable man.

'He was an only son; the death of an only daughter had led his mother to a religious life. He was trained with scrupulous care. He tells us that he "never dared an oath or hazarded a lie." At a very early age he displayed intellectual gifts above ordinary children—he could read the Bible when but seven years old. "My schoolmaster," he says, "used to beat me cruelly, and this drove me to prayer, and it appears that God was near me." He was awakened before he was fourteen. Having read Whitefield's sermons and heard some of the Calvinistic Methodists preach, he inquired of his mother who these Methodists were. In reply she gave him a favorable account of them. He went to hear their preachers again, and was delighted with what he saw. The preaching of these earnest men seems to have had a good effect on young Asbury, as "on one occasion," he writes, "when I was praying in my father's barn, I believe the Lord pardoned my sins and justified my soul." He began to hold meetings in various places—several souls professed to find peace through his labors. After some months he appeared among the Methodists, was licensed as a local preacher, and labored in this capacity about five years. When he received his appointment to America, he had been traveling as an itinerant preacher four or five years, and was then twenty-six years of age.

Asbury's mind was of that peculiar cast that found rest in constant activity. Singularly endowed with a rare combination of intellectual gifts, quick, clear, and accurate in his judgments of men and measures, firm and self-possessed, possessing organizing powers but little inferior, if not equal, to those of the great founder of Methodism, Wesley could not have selected a man better adapted every way to the work of organizing, moulding, and giving permanency to Methodism on the American continent. Such was Francis Asbury, who stood at the head of that marvelous system of

evangelism which was indeed at the beginning like a mustard seed, but which at his death had grown into a vigorous tree, under whose spreading branches more than a hundred thousand souls had found shelter.

In company with Richard Wright he sailed from England, September 4th, 1771, and after a voyage of more than fifty days he landed at Philadelphia, where he found Pilmoor preaching to a large congregation. As yet the infant societies had no bond of union, except that of a common sympathy and a common purpose. Asbury saw at once that government and system were indispensable, not only to success, but to the very existence and perpetuity of this movement. He therefore set to work immediately to put matters in shape, seeking first of all to obtain, as far as possible, an accurate knowledge of the infant societies. For this purpose, after remaining a short time in Philadelphia inspecting the work there, he set out for New York, stopping on the way, on Staten Island, at the house of Peter Van Pelt, a memorable man in the annals of early Methodism, whose brother, a useful local preacher, afterwards became one of the founders of Methodism in Tennessee.

Asbury had left England without a penny, yet he lacked for nothing. "I believe," he wrote at this time, "God hath sent us to this country. All I seek is to be more spiritual and given up entirely to him whom I love." He arrived at New York, November 12th, and opened his mission forthwith, as all the early itinerants were accustomed to do. After a short acquaintance with the people, he writes of them: "I think the Americans are more ready to receive the word than the English." Pilmoor had made the same observation.

In a few days he again writes: "I have not yet the thing I seek—a circulation of the preachers. I am fixed to the Methodist plan."

We see at this early date a hint of what Asbury after-

ward became by "sticking to the Methodist plan"—one of the most successful organizers of scattered forces into a harmonious system, of whom ecclesiastical history furnishes any record.

Methodism, at this time, in the American Colonies, had about six hundred members in society and ten or a dozen itinerants in the field. Some of the latter, by reason of the incessant travel and toil to which they were subjected, were inclined to localize the work. Nor were opportunities and offers wanting for these homeless evangelists to enter the pulpits of other Churches. Asbury himself had a call to an Episcopal Church in Maryland. But he was an itinerant from conviction, firmly believing that no other system could supply the scattered population of America with the Word of Life. "The Church and the nation owe the maintenance of the itinerancy, with its incalculable blessings, chiefly to the invincible energy" and dauntless courage of Francis Asbury, so firmly did he set his face against any localizing tendencies among the itinerants. Whether he pleased or displeased the preachers he cared but little by the side of the work committed to his hands. In the fear of God he organized a winter campaign, scattering these few mounted evangelists over hundreds of miles of territory to preach the everlasting gospel to starving multitudes. In this work they were to endure privations that can never be told—to suffer agony from hunger and cold; to be mobbed and imprisoned; but amid all to utter no word of complaint, but to rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ.

Asbury could not be idle. Soon he was traveling through the country, visiting the towns and villages far and near, preaching at the rate of more than fifteen sermons a week, and maintaining this wonderful average of pulpit labors for more than forty years, surpassing Wesley who averaged about fifteen sermons a week during his long ministry, and

Whitefield who preached ten times a week. He lost no opportunity for doing good, visiting the poor, preaching to them in their humble homes, ministering to the inmates of asylums, breaking the bread of life to prisoners awaiting execution—everywhere proclaiming a free salvation to penitent sinners.

About this time appears the first evidences of Asbury's systematizing hand. In his journal, he records that "he came to his Quarterly Conference, at J. Presbury's, in Christmas week, 1772."

As this is the first Quarterly Conference of which we have any account, in America, we give a part of what Asbury writes concerning it:

"How are the preachers stationed? Brother Strawbridge and Brother Owen in Frederick county, Maryland; Brother King, Brother Webster and Isaac Rollins, on the other side of the Bay; and myself in Baltimore.

"Shall we be strict in our Society meetings and not admit strangers? Agreed.

"We then inquired into the moral character of the preachers and exhorters."

Here is a General Conference in embryo. In our day, some of the work done at this Conference belongs to an annual conference, while a portion of it is still Quarterly Conference business.

The history of the Church at this time is a record of the labors of Asbury and his faithful coadjutors. Travelling incessantly, and preaching day and night, this tireless evangelist finds time to keep up his jottings in his journal. These journals give us an insight into his inner life and reveal the secret of his marvelous power. On almost every page we meet such expressions as this: "Holiness is the element of my soul. My earnest prayer is, that nothing contrary to holiness may live in me." No wonder that the power of the Highest rested upon men possessed of such a

spirit. Asbury must have system, hence the Society which was organized in Baltimore, January 3d, 1773, he divided into two classes—one of men, the other of women. Over the latter, he appointed a woman as class-leader ; and who will affirm that he overstepped the boundary of propriety in so doing ? The following year a Church was built in Lordy Lane—made memorable on account of its being the house in which the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized.

Quarterly meetings had become occasions for the assembling of large crowds, and of great spiritual rejoicing to the Societies. The preaching everywhere was attended with the power and demonstration of the Spirit. The influence of Methodism was deepening and widening, moving the people as nothing had done since the “great awakening” under Jonathan Edwards.

But the ecclesiastical sea was not always smooth. The winds of opposition began to blow. Asbury’s rigid military discipline had aroused antagonism. The spirit of rebellion was astir. Nothing but Asbury’s unselfish devotion to the work and his invincible courage, saved the infant craft from going to pieces. The hand of a master was at the helm. Still struggling with the opposition against him and his policy, as an obedient son in the gospel he was more than willing to resign the superintendency of the societies, a position he never sought, into the hands of another. In response to an urgent appeal for more preachers, Mr. Wesley sent over Thomas Rankin, and appointed him superintendent in the stead of Asbury, not on account of a lack of qualification on Asbury’s part, but because Rankin was an older man, had been longer in the itinerancy, and was withal an experienced disciplinarian. It is doubtful, however, whether the issue justified Mr. Wesley’s course in removing Asbury from the superintendency of the work at this time. Still it is a fact of history, that under the leader-

ship of this clear-headed, honest-hearted Scotchman the disturbances which had arisen under Asbury's administration were quieted, and the infant Church entered upon an era of unusual prosperity, which, however, was soon checked by the gathering war-cloud of the Revolution.

Rankin was a man of iron will, and his administrative powers were of a superior order. His preaching was attended with wonderful manifestations of divine power. On several occasions he had scarcely begun preaching when he was compelled to desist, so great was the tumult among the people—some crying for mercy, many mightily praising God, while others “were in an agony for full redemption in the blood of Jesus.”

Rankin was an intense royalist, and he was not as prudent as he might have been in expressing his sentiments. He was greatly alarmed at the news which reached him from Boston. Hostilities had actually begun. He hastened to embark for England, where he might live in peace. He spent the remnant of his days itinerating in the northern country, was present at the death of Mr. Wesley, and finished his course with joy, May 17, 1810.

On the outbreak of the Revolution, all the English preachers returned to England except Asbury, whose convictions would not allow him to leave the societies in their time of greatest need. He was unjustly suspected of being a royalist, and was forced to remain in seclusion for a time; but a letter written by him fell into the hands of the revolutionists. In this letter he expressed the opinion that the colonists would ultimately secure their independence. For such sentiments he was permitted to come forth from his hiding-place and preach unmolested to the close of the war.

Rankin having returned to England, the societies were now without a leader. Communication with Mr. Wesley was uncertain, if not absolutely cut off. In this exigency

the American preachers, quite a number of whom were now in the itinerancy, informally appointed Asbury superintendent, and as such he continued to act until he was elected bishop at the organization of the Church.

The Colonial Churches experienced a sweeping revival during the period immediately preceding the Revolution, and in the midst of those trying days this little band of faithful itinerants in the Churches, in the army, from behind prison-bars, in the streets, everywhere proclaimed with marvelous power, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Among these humble evangelists were men of surpassing gifts. Benjamin Abbott, the Bunyan of American Methodism, as he has been called, went through the colonies like a blazing torch, arousing the people everywhere to the wildest excitement. As a mover and controller of men from his throne—the pulpit—he stood almost alone. Possessed of a strong mind, and a nature attuned to the fury of the storm, his preaching was as resistless as a flood. Wherever he went a mysterious power rested on the people, hundreds falling down and lying for hours as if they were dead. During this period, and for years afterward, he labored among the colonists with marvelous success.

Another noted itinerant, scarcely inferior to Abbott in mental endowments, certainly his equal in enthusiastic, unselfish devotion to the cause of the infant Churches, began his ministry about this time, and for years was one of the leading spirits in planting Methodism in the New World. This man was Freeborn Garrettson. He was not brought up among the Methodists, but when he heard their preachers, he was drawn, against his inclinations, irresistibly toward them. He says: "It was like death to me, for I thought I had rather serve God in any other way than among them." But he obtained a clear sense of his sins forgiven, overcame his prejudices against the Methodists, and soon became a zealous itinerant.

The English system of holding annual conferences had now been introduced, and was already beginning to exert that soul-welding power over itinerant preachers, which is one of the most striking features of the Methodist itinerancy. At the Conference of 1774, the second that was held in America, statistics show ten circuits, seventeen preachers, and two thousand and seventy-three members. The increase during the Conference year was nearly one hundred per cent. The preachers at this Conference were ordered to change at the end of six months, except Asbury and Rankin, who were to change in three months. And so under the faithful preaching of this little band of laborious itinerants, in spite of the depletion incident to a seven year's war, and the demoralization consequent upon it, the Church continued to increase in numbers until, at its organization in 1784, it numbered but little less than fifteen thousand communicants.

The name of Jesse Lee has already appeared in these pages. He preached his first sermon in 1779, in North Carolina. No name in the early records of the Church shines with brighter luster, or gathers about it more of consecrated effort, unflagging zeal, and eminent service than that of Jesse Lee, the founder of Methodism in New England. Though not admitted into the itinerant ranks until 1783, he was nevertheless a useful preacher among the soldiers, winning them to Christ by his earnest preaching and simple piety. A record of his labors has been worthily embalmed in a biography by the late Dr. L. M. Lee.

During the Revolution, and the period immediately succeeding it, the difficulties encountered by the itinerant preachers were unparalleled and well-nigh insurmountable. Less consecrated men would have turned back from before them. But God was with them, nerving every heart to endure without murmuring, "violent oppositions, bitter persecutions, and grievous sufferings." Some of the preachers

were fined and imprisoned “for no other offence than traveling and preaching the gospel.” When all other accusations failed, they were arrested on the charge of vagrancy—having no visible means of support.” Several were cast into the county jail, others were bound over in a heavy bond not to preach in certain counties ; others still were beaten with stripes and blows nigh unto death, and carried their scars down to the grave.” A full history of these times recording the sufferings of this little band of self-sacrificing itinerants, would be as thrilling as Fox’s “Book of Martyrs.” But God stood by the struggling Church through the fire of the Revolution, and at the close of the contest, Methodism had shot its roots deeper and farther into the soil of American humanity, and was established more firmly than when the war began.

The time had now come when it was highly expedient, if not absolutely necessary, to the perpetuity of Methodism in America, to erect the Societies into an independent ecclesiastical organization. Wesley had already anticipated such an event, and to meet the emergency which had thus providentially arisen, he solemnly set apart Dr. Thomas Coke to the office of Bishop, conferring upon him full powers to ordain Deacons and Elders, to consecrate Asbury to the Episcopal office, and, in a word, to set in motion whatever machinery was necessary to the organization of an Episcopal Church. Thus empowered, Dr. Coke sailed for America.

Asbury had been flying, “like the apocalyptic angel, having the everlasting gospel to preach,” over all the central parts of the continent, from New York to North Carolina. In November, 1784, weary and worn with travel and labor, he arrived on Sunday, during public service, at Barrett’s Chapel. A man of small stature, feminine but musical voice, was officiating. He was the first missionary since the Revolution, and was like an angel from heaven sent to

Asbury's relief after his desertion by all his English associates. This man, small in stature, but of "gigantic soul," was Thomas Coke, the first Bishop of Methodism in the New World.



CHAPTER III.



N his letter dated September 10, 1784, and addressed to "Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury and our Brethren in North America," Mr. Wesley says: "By a very uncommon train of providences many of the provinces of North America are totally disjoined from the British Empire, and erected into independent States. The English Government has no authority over them, either civil or ecclesiastical. A civil authority is exercised over them partly by the Congress, partly by the State Assemblies. But no one either exercises or claims any ecclesiastical authority at all. In this peculiar situation some thousands of the inhabitants of these States desire my advice, and, in compliance with their desire, I have drawn up a little sketch. Lord King's account of the Primitive Church convinced me, many years ago, that Bishops and Presbyters are the same order, and, consequently, have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned, from time to time, to exercise this right by ordaining part of our traveling preachers; but I have still refused, not only for peace sake, but because I was determined, as little as possible, to violate the established order of the National Church to which I belonged. But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are Bishops who have a legal jurisdiction. In America there are none, and but few parish ministers; so that for some hundreds of miles together there are none, either to baptize or to administer the Lord's Supper. Here, therefore, my scruples are at an end; and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order and invade no man's right by appointing and sending laborers into the harvest. I have, accordingly, appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury to be joint superintendents over our brethren in

North America. As also, Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as Elders among them by baptizing and administering the Lord's Supper."

In accordance with the instructions contained in this letter, "it was agreed," says Asbury, "to form ourselves into an Episcopal Church, and to have Superintendents, Elders and Deacons." For this purpose, Whatcoat writes: "On the 24th (of December, 1784) we rode to Baltimore," and the little company of preachers assembled at 10 o'clock A. M., in Lovely Lane Chapel, in the first General Conference of American Methodism.

The student of Methodist history desires to know who were present at this Conference, composed, as some have conjectured, of at least sixty of the more than eighty itinerants laboring at that time in this Western field. "We are certain, however, of the presence of but twenty-one." Among these are some, at least, who, by their heroic deeds and great sufferings, now occupied positions as leaders in the front ranks of Methodism; Gill, Ellis and O'Kelley, who afterwards caused so much disturbance in the Church; Garrettson, Poythress, towering and unfortunate; Ware and others, men of commanding talents in that day, these were there to give to this untried experiment in ecclesiastical adventure the full endorsement of their matured judgment. Singular unanimity prevailed among those present, and throughout the connection, as to the wisdom of organizing an Episcopal Church. A part of the duty of this first General Conference, was to enact rules and regulations for the government of this newly organized Church. These enactments were embodied in a volume "composing a form of Discipline for the ministers, preachers, and other members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America." Hitherto, Mr. Wesley's large Minutes had sufficed for the guidance of the infant societies. At Perry Hill, where Dr. Coke and Asbury spent several days just before the

Christmas Conference, as this Conference has since been called, these Minutes were revised by these two legal minds and adapted to the form of government which they proposed to establish. In this form they were unanimously adopted by the ministers present at the Christmas Conference. Coke and Asbury were, therefore, the real framers of the original Constitution for American Methodism. At this Conference Asbury was set apart to the office work of a Bishop, not, however, until he had been elevated to this position by the suffrages of his brethren. This Conference lasted only ten days—a matter of some surprise considering the amount of preaching that was done, the important interests under review, and the care and deliberation given to their consideration.

While many minor features in our form of government have been modified to meet the demand of changing circumstances, the doctrines of Methodism, and indeed its entire economy, in all essential respects remain substantially just as they came from the hands of Mr. Wesley. The twenty-five Articles, constituting the corner-stone of this edifice, are the same. The General Rules are in the main unchanged. The condition of membership is still “a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from sin.” The itinerancy in its grand mission of preaching the gospel to all, shows no signs of decay. This system, in spite of the opposition of its enemies, and the fear of its friends, by reason of the success which it has achieved, is to-day fuller of life and aggressive power than its most ardent supporters would have claimed for it at the beginning. The frame-work of the system, so well adjusted in all its parts, has been a help rather than a hindrance in spreading the truth. It is not perfect—no one claims that it is; but for supplying its congregations with pastors, and its preachers with pulpits, and the people with the gospel, ecclesiastical history does not record its equal. •

The respective duties of the bishops, elders and deacons were minutely defined in the Christmas Conference, and they have remained substantially the same to this day. At that early day, steps were taken for taking care of the worn-out preachers, and of the widows and children of those who had died in the work. For this purpose, a "Chartered Fund" was created to which every preacher was required to contribute a small sum. The cause of education was not overlooked, especially the education of the ministry. Any one who will read the amount of studying that was required of the young preachers in those days, will be surprised that there ever should have been a glorification of ignorance in the pulpit, except as an apology for laziness or as a cloak for stinginess. Here are some of the directions to preachers—especially young preachers: "Rise at four; from four to five in the morning, and from five to six in the evening, meditate, pray and read, partly the Scriptures with Mr. Wesley's notes, partly the closely practical parts of what he has published. From six in the morning till twelve, (allowing one hour for breakfast,) read in order, with much prayer, the Christian Library and other pious books. Read the most useful books, and that regularly and constantly. Steadily spend all the morning in this employment, or at least five hours in four and twenty." Those sturdy men say that the people are no better because "the preachers are not more knowing and more holy." Besides these seven rules for the preachers, which left no room for idleness, in order that the ministers might be thoroughly furnished for their work as teachers, we find Coke and Asbury, soon after the close of this Conference, raising funds to erect a college for training young men for the ministry, and for educating the sons of ministers engaged in the work. And on June 5th, 1785, just five months after the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized, Asbury laid the corner-stone of Cokesbury College, at Abingdon, Maryland. They err

egregiously; who decry an educated ministry because, as they suppose, the founders of Methodism were unlearned men. Wesley was one of the ripest scholars of his day. Coke was a graduate of Oxford. Asbury employed the English language with force and precision. Many of the early preachers were ignorant when they began their ministry, but by close application, they became scholars of no mean attainments. The curriculum of Cokesbury College included Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French and German among the languages. Whatever forces have contributed to the success of Methodism in the world, one thing is sure, ignorance in the ministry has not been one of them.

The regulations prescribed by Mr. Wesley, for the conduct of the preachers, have been so highly esteemed for their wisdom, that they have come down to us with but little alteration as they were adopted by the Christmas Conference; one or two of them, however, were more curious than useful, and were soon eliminated. The eighth and ninth advised the young preachers not to "affect the gentleman. You have no more to do with this character than with that of a dancing-master. A preacher of the gospel is the servant of all. Be ashamed of nothing but sin; not of fetching wood, (if time permit,) or drawing water; not of cleaning your own shoes or your neighbors." These soon disappeared from the minutes.

The Conference adopted Mr. Wesley's rule respecting "those who think they are called to preach." It is found unchanged in substance in the Book of Discipline to-day.

These minute regulations for the conduct of the preacher reveal the strength of the system of government under which the church had just been organized, and at the same time furnish a reason for the wonderful history which Episcopal Methodism has recorded during the first century of its existence. These itinerants were men of one work,

and to its faithful performance they devoted their whole time and talents.

The minutes of the year previous to the first General Conference, report forty-six circuits, eighty-three preachers, besides Coke and Asbury, and fourteen thousand, nine hundred and eighty-eight members in society. Methodism had established itself more or less permanently in New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. No sooner had the Conference closed than the preachers began to scatter themselves throughout this wide stretch of territory, urged on in their work with new zeal and fresh courage and undying love for men. The minutes of the next year show with what success they preached. There was an increase of more than three thousand members.

Coke spent five months in the States after the close of the Christmas Conference, traveling through the connection and preaching almost daily. He crosses the Susquehanna on ice, spends ten days in Philadelphia, hastens to New York, where he preaches repeatedly, returns to Philadelphia, almost flies through Delaware, so rapidly does he travel, and directs his course southward through Virginia, where he meets with some perilous adventures and hair-breadth escapes. He had swollen streams to cross. Riding into one (there were no bridges and ferries in those days), very strong and deep, he says: "I did not observe that a tree, brought down by the flood, lay across the landing-place. I endeavored, but in vain, to drive my horse against the stream, and go round the tree. I was afraid to turn my horse's head to the stream and afraid to go back. In this dilemma I thought it most prudent to lay hold on the tree, and go over it, the water being shallow on the other side. But I did not advert to the danger of loosening the tree from its hold, for no sooner did I execute my purpose, so far as to lay hold of the tree, and that instant the horse was carried from

under me ; but the motion I gave it loosened it, and down the stream it instantly carried me. Some distance off there grew a tree in the middle of the stream, the root of which had formed a little island and divided the stream, and here the tree which I held was stopped. Instantly there came down with the flood a large branch on my back, which was so heavy that I was afraid it would break my back. I was now jammed up for a considerable time, expecting that my strength would soon be exhausted, and I should drop between the tree and the branch. Here I pleaded aloud with God in good earnest. One promise which I particularly urged I remember well—‘Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world !’ I felt no fear at all of the pain of dying, or of death itself, or of hell.” Finally he succeeded in freeing himself from his perilous position, and climbed up the little bank, where he lay panting for breath. After recovering sufficient strength he walked a mile to a house, where a negro furnished him with a ragged shirt and other clothes, while his were drying by the fire. Soon after recovering his horse he pursues his journey through Virginia, preaches against slavery, gets mobbed for it, and in a short while sailed for England, but not to stay.

Asbury, as has already been stated, although appointed by Mr. Wesley, joint-superintendent with Dr. Coke, of the American Church, declined ordination to that office until elected by his brethren. Accordingly he and Coke were elected superintendents. Asbury’s friend, Otterbein, founder of German Methodism in the United States, was present and assisted in the ordination services. Asbury preached his first sermon after his ordination on the evening the Conference adjourned, January 3, 1785. He found no help from preaching from his new dignity. “My mind,” he says, “was unsettled, and I was slow in my testimony.” Immediately on the adjournment of Conference

he resumes his travels and labors. He journeyed through Virginia and into South Carolina, as far as Charleston, at the rate of thirty and forty miles a day, preaching, baptizing, now and then ordaining an itinerant, everywhere confirming the Churches, encouraging the brethren and infusing into the whole body of ministers his own restless, burning spirit. The people generally he finds are pleased with the Episcopal form of government. "To the Catholic Presbyterians it gives satisfaction, but the Baptists are discontented." Why, he does not say.

The work was now spreading with unparalleled rapidity, pushing its way amid opposition, persecution, mobs, floods, snow and death, across the Alleghanies to the West into the Holston territory, as far as Nova Scotia to the East and Northeast, where Garretson was sent as a missionary from the Christmas Conference, reaching as far South as Georgia, where we find that grand, but unfortunate, gospel preacher—Beverly Allen—as the solitary representative of Methodism. In his travels through the connection, Asbury made occasional visits to the Empire State of the South. The house is still standing, in Greene county, in which he held the Conference of 1808. Tradition points to the corner in which that venerable man sat while holding the Conference. The first Conference in this State was held in April, 1778, in the forks of Broad and Savannah rivers where the town of Petersburg was afterwards located. So far as I can learn, from published documents, it is generally supposed that Methodism was introduced into Georgia not far from this place. But from traditional evidence, which is not wholly unreliable, it is probable that a society and house of worship were in existence at or before the date of this Conference, near the line of Banks and Franklin counties. A reliable gentleman, living near that place, assures me that when his grandfather moved into that community, nearly one hundred years ago, a log Church

was then standing. Who organized that Society I have not been able to ascertain. It is more than likely that, as was frequently the case in those days, a zealous local preacher, whose name is now lost, emigrated to this section with a company of Methodists, organized them into a society, and, together, they erected one of the first Methodist Churches in Georgia. At the close of Allen's first year—1785—the minutes report but seventy-eight members in Georgia. At the Conference of 1789 there were two thousand and eleven. This large increase gives us some idea of the wonderful hold Methodism had already gained among the people of the Southern States, the first of its greatest triumphs at that time, as it is in our day.

After holding the Georgia Conference, Asbury directed his course to the northward, climbing mountains, swimming swollen streams, frequently suffering from hunger and cold, everywhere breaking the Bread of Life to starving men and women.

As a sample of Episcopal fare in those days, we present the following taken from his journal :

“ We had to cross the Alleghany mountain again at a bad passage. Our course lay over mountains and through valleys, and the mud and mire were such as might scarcely be expected in December. We came to an old forsaken habitation. Here our horses grazed about while we boiled our meat; midnight brought us up at Jones', after riding, perhaps, forty or fifty miles. Our host waked us at four o'clock. We journeyed on through devious, lonely wilds, where no food might be found except what grew in the woods, or was carried with us. Near midnight we stopped at A——'s, who hissed his dogs at us; but we went in. Our supper was tea. Brothers Phœbus and Cook took to the woods. I lay along the floor on a few deer-skins, with the fleas. Next day, after riding twenty miles, we came to

Clarksburg, and man and beast being so outdone, it took us ten hours to accomplish it."

In this tired condition Asbury preached to about seven hundred people. He rode thirty miles after three o'clock, and "about eleven came to Father Raymond's," went to bed at midnight, rose at five and was off again. "Oh how glad I should be," he writes, "of a plain, clean plank to lie on as preferable to most of the beds, and when the beds are in a bad state, the floors are worse." There were no attractions in the office of a Bishop that a man should desire it.

Jesse Lee was not at the Christmas Conference, but he was indefatigable in labors as the most laborious. In the Summer of 1790 we find him on the Boston commons gathering a crowd of curious listeners about him to hear what a man who acted so strangely, had to say. One who was present, records his recollections of the scene and the effect of his preaching. He had never "heard such preaching before." His preaching was so strong and clear and eloquent, that it was agreed on all hands that such a preacher had not visited New England since Whitefield. This man was Thomas Ware, who afterward became one of the most famous and successful preachers in America. The disputatious spirit of the New England clergy found a match in the ready wit of Lee. These learned gentlemen put questions to him in Latin and Greek; he answered them in Dutch, a smattering of which he had picked up in his boyhood. They thought it was Hebrew, and considered him well qualified to preach. Rigid Calvinism was still the regnant religion in that section. The new theology, misrepresented by its opponents as salvation by works, found little sympathy among those who believed nothing that could not be harmonized with the "decrees," and in whose creed the then leading tenets were Election, Reprobation and Final Perseverance.

It is safe to say that the principles for which the heroes

of the Revolution fought—"liberty and equality"—contributed largely to the favorable reception of that plan of redemption which taught that "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Besides, the undisguised immorality of many of the New England clergy, and the looseness of their teachings, rendered the more necessary the introduction of that system of religion which occupied the middle ground between the coldness of Puritanic Calvinism and the license of Anti-Nomianism. Methodism, after it gained a footing in that section, operated as a check upon that form of rationalism which has made Boston head-quarters for the various species of infidelity which enter so largely into the literature of New England. These gracious results are due very largely to the labors of Jesse Lee who traveled extensively throughout the New England States, preaching daily, arousing the people, emphasizing the doctrine of conscious pardon of sins, organizing societies, and laying the foundations of Methodism which, in our day, is one of the leading Churches in that portion of the United States. We shall have occasion to refer again in the course of this narrative to this devoted servant of God.

In 1789, John Dickens, who was stationed that year in Philadelphia, founded the "Book Concern," which has done so much in the way of furnishing the people with a pure literature, and for the spread of Methodism in the world. This small establishment has grown into three immense publishing houses, one each at New York, Cincinnati and Nashville. Dickens was not only a man of fine business qualifications, but an able preacher and devoted servant of the Church. He lived to see the enterprise which he had projected established upon a solid basis, and reaching with its publications almost every community of Methodism in the United States.

The year 1790 is memorable in the history of American Methodism on account of the introduction of Sunday-schools, or, at least, an authoritative recognition of their existence by an Annual Conference. These schools were to continue from six to ten o'clock in the morning, and from two to six in the afternoon. This was rendered necessary in order that the children might be instructed, not only in the Scriptures, but in the ordinary branches of an English education, for very few children attended school in the week.

During the years 1787-8, a remarkable revival of religion swept over the country. In Virginia was laboring John Easter—one of the most zealous and successful preachers the Methodists ever had. On Brunswick Circuit, from fifteen hundred to two thousand were converted under his ministry. Among these were William McKendree and Enoch George, both of whom were afterward elevated to the episcopacy. Such was the depth and power of this revival that the number of members increased from fifteen thousand, in 1784, to about sixty thousand, in 1792. Of those whose apostolic labors and marked success have rendered their names forever memorable in the annals of Methodism, those of Lee, Abbott, Poythress, Garrettson, Hope Hull, Bruce, Major and O'Kelly are conspicuous. The work had been divided into districts under the leadership of Elders. In 1789, this name was changed to Presiding Elders, which is still retained in Methodist phraseology.

The period of which we are now writing, properly closes with the second General Conference, which was held in 1792, in the city of Baltimore. From this point we may survey, for a brief space, the extent and results of Methodism on the American Continent. Beginning with an obscure society of a half dozen members in 1766, in less than a generation this little handfull had grown into a

great army scattered over every State in the Union. Under the leadership of those chosen men of God, whose names the Church will not willingly let die, this system of evangelism had pushed its way over all opposition to the remotest settlements in the South, across the mountain-barriers to the outposts of civilization in the West; through snow and formalism it had penetrated the heart of New England; it had already planted itself on the shores of the Northern lakes; it had early crossed over into Canada and gained a footing in that province. It had established a "Book Concern" for supplying the people with Methodist literature. On all the great moral questions of the day it gave forth no uncertain sound. While the ministers of some other Churches were allowed to indulge in the social glass without rebuke, the minutes of the Conferences, during this period, contain statutes strictly forbidding Methodist preachers from drinking wine. History records that in all measures looking to the reformation and salvation of the people, Methodism has not only stood abreast of the foremost, but has been the leader of them all.

CHAPTER IV.



HE records of the General Conference of 1792, have not been preserved. Jesse Lee, and one or two others who were present, give us all the information we have of its work. A large number of the preachers assembled in Baltimore, many of them supposing, so rapid was the spread of Methodism, that they would not all meet again in a General Conference. And, indeed, Lee had already broached the question of a delegated General Conference, which he continued to advocate until 1808, when the Church was forced from necessity to adopt this measure. This session was characterized by a stormy debate. O'Kelly introduced a resolution giving the preachers the right of appeal to the Conference from the appointment of the Bishop. Coke was surprised at the ability displayed by the disputants on both sides. After the discussion had lasted a whole week, the measure was lost. O'Kelly, with a few others, walked off from Conference, as Lee says, with their "saddle-bags, great coats, and other bundles," never again to take part with the Methodists. McKendree, influenced by O'Kelly, joined the disaffected party; his name, however, is retained in the appointments. But after becoming better acquainted with Asbury, and becoming satisfied that he was not the tyrant O'Kelly represented him to be, he resumed his place among the itinerant preachers. This Conference took steps for another General Conference, four years afterward, and quadrennial General Conferences have been the order in the Methodist Episcopal Churches ever since.

Asbury was now almost constantly on the wing, traveling with unprecedented rapidity throughout the connection from Boston to Georgia, and from the Atlantic, across the Alleghanies, far out toward the Mississippi valley.

"I have but little rest, by night or by day," he writes. Passing through Virginia, he endeavored to counteract the schismatic preaching of the O'Kelly party. O'Kelly was a strong man. He had labored faithfully and successfully on the line of Virginia and North Carolina, for nearly twenty years. He was immensely popular in this region, and his position at the late General Conference was not altogether untenable. For a while he was silent; but his restless spirit could not long remain quiet. He began to assail the economy of the Methodist Episcopal Church with all the force which the plausibility of his position afforded. The result of those attacks is shown in the losses which the minutes report—no less than nineteen thousand, or nearly one-third of the whole number, having fallen away in five years. The defection, however, did not last long. The Methodist doctrines and polity were too strongly intrenched in the hearts of preachers and people to be overthrown by considerations which had little to recommend them, except personal vanity and worldly ambition.

Asbury is still indefatigable in labors, suffering with uncomplaining spirit the hardships incident to a frontier life. He travels and preaches incessantly, comforting the brethren, and gaining much consolation from their occasional companionship. In his long, lonely rides through deep swamps and trackless wilds, he often sighed for the sympathy of kindred spirits. But he was denied this boon for the most part.

Still on his way he writes: "Our roads are rough; I am sick; our fare is coarse; but it is enough—I am to die." Passing rapidly through Virginia, North and South Carolina, preaching as he goes, we find him once more in Georgia. With thirty preachers they held Conference, slept and kept their sick in a room twelve feet square. The records of the travels and sufferings and labors of this apostolic Bishop, scattered on almost every page of his

laconic journal, reveal a tale of self-sacrifice and devotion, such as the world has rarely seen. The foundations of Methodism in the United States were laid in want and blood and death; and the men who took part in constructing this wonderful system willingly suffered the loss of all things that they might win "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Their patience under persecution, their courage in rebuking sin, their faithfulness in proclaiming the truth, their unselfish devotion to the one work of preaching the gospel furnished incontestable proof that they were men of God. These facts, contrasting so sharply with the questionable lives of many of the State clergy, with the indifferent attitude of a number of the ministers of other Churches, contributed largely to the ready acceptance of Methodist doctrines by the common people.

Asbury had four places where he was always glad to spend a few days of quiet and rest: Traveler's Rest, in Massachusetts, Perry Hall, in Maryland, Rumbert Hall, in South Carolina, and Russell's Mansion, in East Tennessee, possibly the only places that were like home to him. These way-side homes were as necessary as they were pleasant. Often he would reach one of these retreats worn down with toil and travel, and sick from exposure. Besides, the care of all the Churches required many and frequent changes to adapt a developing system to the conditions of society and the wants of the people, was a cause of constant irritation to his nervous constitution. No wonder under these circumstances he thought seriously of resigning his office, which he actually did several years afterward; but his resignation was not accepted.

The amusing and the heroic are set down side by side in Asbury's journals. He always carried tea in his saddle-bags. Stopping for the night on one of his journeys he handed his bundle of tea to the lady to make him a cup for

his supper. When supper came on, what was his surprise to find that she had boiled all of his tea, thrown away the juice and preserved the leaves, only. She had never seen any tea before, nor did he see any more until some time afterward.

Abbott continued to preach in Virginia and Maryland, and other parts of the connection with quenchless zeal, the same marvelous results attending his ministry, the people trembling and falling down like they were dead, under his powerful prayers and sermons. He records many incidents of this kind. "I held prayer-meeting," he says, "and the Lord manifested his love among us. There was a shaking of the dry bones. One lay as if she were dead for nearly two hours, and then came to with praises to God." Such scenes were of daily occurrence. Thus he continued to labor with unabated ardor until his death, which took place August 13th, 1796. He died as he had lived, shouting.

Lee was still in New England, earnestly striving to lay the foundations of Methodism, but meeting with little success in its chief metropolis—Boston. He was sowing seed, however, which, in a few years bore an abundant harvest. Long before he passed to his reward, he had the satisfaction of seeing flourishing societies scattered throughout Massachusetts and the province of Maine. His flow of spirits secured for him many a pleasant moment. His wit was keen and ready, giving him an easy victory over all who crossed swords with him in this field. On one occasion, when he had failed, temporarily, to secure a preaching place in Boston, and was riding somewhat dejected to Lynn where he had a flourishing society, he saw two lawyers on horseback hastening after him with evident purpose of amusement. They entered into conversation with him about extemporaneous speaking, and asked him if he did not sometimes make mistakes? "Yes," he replied. "What do you do?" "Well, if they are important, I correct them,

if not, I let them go. For instance, if, in preaching, I should wish to quote the text, 'the devil is a liar, and the father of it,' and should say instead, 'the devil is a *lawyer*,' etc., why, it is so near the truth, I should possibly let it pass." "Humph," exclaimed the lawyer, "I don't know whether you are more a knave or a fool." "Neither," rejoined Lee, and looking from one to the other, "I believe I am just between the two." The lawyers left him in a hurry.

Hope Hull, than whom the Methodism of that day had no more eloquent representative in the pulpit, was drawing immense crowds of people along his itinerant journeys from New York to Georgia, attracted by his wonderful preaching, accounts of which tradition still relates in New England and the South. He was a man of great purity and firmness of character, and was so venerable in appearance that the young especially were awed by it into profound respect. He was the chief founder of Methodism in Georgia, and was instrumental in building the first brick house that was ever erected in Washington. He was universally popular, and universally respected for the goodness of his heart and the correctness of his judgment. He possessed uncommon power over a congregation, and under his preaching hundreds were converted and added to the Church. After traveling for years, he located and settled at Athens, Georgia, where he helped to found the State University, and, for a time, was its acting President. He died in the faith, and left the heritage of a spotless character to his adopted State.

Another man of rare intellectual gifts had been found by the Methodists in Virginia and brought into the itinerancy. This was Valentine Cook, who was as homely as he was gifted. He was violently opposed by his father, but finally obtained his consent to join the band of itinerants. He traveled through Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania, and was one of the founders of Methodism in Kentucky.

He was a theologian and a scholar, possessing an unusual command of language. There was no mightier man in the pulpit than Cook. His preaching had this excellency—it moved the people. A godless hearer remarked that he “could listen to Rev. Mr. — and sleep soundly the following night,” but added : “I never get a comfortable night’s rest for at least a month after hearing Valentine Cook preach.” He was abundant in labors as well as successful in winning souls to Christ.

Coleman Carlisle, and his brother Simeon, were pioneers of Southern Methodism—laborious, unselfish, harmless men. The former would often ride several miles home from an appointment, after supper, plough the same horse (for he had but one) until midnight, and the next morning would find him on his way to another appointment. The latter reproved some wild boys for their bad behavior during preaching. One of them slipped a pistol into his saddle-bags and had him arrested for stealing. The preacher was overwhelmed when the pistol was found in his possession. He was tried and convicted. The Church threw him off. The young man made a confession on his dying bed. Carlisle was afterward restored to the Church and died in the ministry.

These men, humble in appearance and spirit, many of whom were of limited attainments, but mighty in the Scriptures, planted the seeds of Methodism throughout the Middle and Southern States from which has sprung a harvest the extent of which no man can measure. These faithful evangelists, with many others who were soon to occupy prominent positions in the Church, came from their various fields of labor, worn with toil and stained with the dust of travel, to take counsel together in the first quadrennial session of the General Conference, held at Baltimore, in 1776.

The economy of Methodism was still in the formative stage. Asbury and his co-laborers, during the four years

immediately preceding this General Conference, had seen the necessity for additional legislation. The law was then framed, touching the licensing of preachers, almost precisely as it stands in the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to-day. The length of time that should elapse before they were eligible to Deacon's orders was fixed at four years. Asbury was so worn from excessive travel and labor, and the work had grown to such proportions, that he desired the Conference to elect two or three other Bishops to divide with him the work of superintending the Church, but Dr. Coke, promising to devote himself to the service of the Church in America, he withdrew his request. An address was received from the British Conference, declaring that "whatever differences may mark other denominations, we are eminently one body." This address was responded to in the same fraternal spirit.

The whole Church was now divided into six annual Conferences, which, in our day, have increased to more than a hundred, and extend over the whole of the North American Continent. The business of the Conference was interspersed with frequent preaching. Asbury records that souls were "awakened and converted," an almost unheard of thing in these days. Why?

These tireless evangelists were soon in the saddle and on the road to their respective fields of labor. Asbury passed rapidly through Virginia, preaching by the way and encouraging the brethren. He had an opportunity of refuting a slander against the preachers in the South, which is still current in some quarters. Traveling through South Carolina he saw a negro, named Punch, sitting on the bank of a creek fishing. Stopping his horse, he asked :

"Do you ever pray?"

"No sir."

Asbury alighted and astonished the negro by kneeling down and praying for him. Twenty years afterward the

Bishop was surprised on receiving a visit from a negro. It was Punch who had come quite a distance to tell the good Bishop that, through his prayer on the bank of the creek, he had been led to Christ. Punch became noted for his religious conversation and prayers. Crowds would gather to hear him. The overseer opposed him in his efforts to reclaim his fellow-slaves. One night as he was beginning a private prayer-meeting, he heard the overseer's voice calling him. Going out he was surprised to hear from the overseer's lips: "Punch, will you pray for me?" Punch gladly responded, the overseer was converted and afterward became a local preacher. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, has not been slow to carry the gospel to the negro.

Lee continued to labor for several years from this time in Virginia, where he was universally popular, both for "his rare eloquence and his unsparing devotion to his work." And his keen wit and his genial humor made him the idol of the Church and the terror of its enemies. During this period a revival swept over the Church, of remarkable power. More than seventeen thousand souls were added to its membership. The O'Kelly schism had been effectually checked and Virginia shared largely in the fruits of the revival.

Richard Whatcoat, one of the saintliest men in Methodism, had been elected Bishop in 1800, and was now traveling and laboring with apostolic zeal throughout the connection. He was well worthy to be associated with Asbury in the highest office in the Church. He had passed his three score when he was elected Bishop. Although he served the Church but a little more than five years in this capacity, yet during this short period so faithful was he in discharging the duties of his office that the entire Church felt the impress of his saintly character. Asbury was now practically the only living Bishop, and so continued up to the

General Conference of 1808, when William McKendree was elevated to the episcopacy.

McKendree was the Blackstone of the Methodist Episcopal Church. His commentaries on the constitution and government of the Church in the form of episcopal and other addresses, have been the guides in all subsequent legislation and interpretations of Church law. His administrative talents were of a high order. He was a magnificent preacher; he was equally noted for his Christian character. Nothing more clearly reveals the hand of Providence in Methodism than the fact that when an emergency arose the man was ready to meet it. Wesley, Fletcher, Whitefield, Asbury, McKendree did a service for Christianity which they seemed specially raised up to perform. And when McKendree, with surprising clearness and cogency of logic had defined the powers, limitations and relations of the several parts of the Methodist economy, in the hour of greatest danger when less acute minds failed to see the revolutionary, if not fatal results that would inevitably follow from restricting the appointing power of the Bishops—in this emergency another marvelous man came to the rescue. Joshua Soule, having been elected Bishop, declined to be consecrated, stating as his reason for so doing that he could not administer the law of the Church so long as the presiding eldership was elective. It is not going too far to say that it is probable the Church at this time was saved from a fearful catastrophe by the firmness and good sense of Joshua Soule. We are too near the death of this truly great man to form a just estimate of his character. When the Church divided he adhered South. He died in 1867 in a good old age.

The history of the Church for the next thirty years—its trials and its triumphs, its conflicts and its conquests—is a record *in extenso* of the sufferings and successes of that host of itinerant evangelists who, leaving all for Christ's

sake and the gospel's, threaded trackless wildernesses, climed perilous mountains, crossed swollen creeks and rivers, and carried the news of salvation to thousands who heard for the first time from their lips the story of the Cross. Nothing but sheer necessity could drive these devoted men from the itinerant field. Pecuniary embarrassments or domestic concerns would force them to locate, some for a short, others for a longer time, while many never returned to the itinerant ranks. Nothing could dampen their ardor or quench their zeal. They preached scarcely less as local than as traveling preachers.

The increase of the number of preachers during these years of hardship and toil, is matter of astonishment. Their labors were abundant, their sufferings, at times, severe, their pay scant, exposed to all sorts of dangers, their lives often imperiled from cold and hail and hostile Indians, fasting frequently twenty-four hours, and as long out of sight of a human habitation—under these circumstanees, it is not strange that a large per cent. of these devoted men located every year. And yet, although the membership of the Church at this time increased with astonishing rapidity, the rate of increase among the preachers was larger still.

Methodism had now crystalized into a thoroughly organized Church, with its various parts so well adapted each to each, and the whole to the object of its existence—supplying the masses with the word of life—and withal it had been so successful, that few could be found so radical as not to be satisfied with its doctrines and government. Two questions, however, disturbed the deliberations of the preachers in their annual and quadrennial sessions—slavery and the presiding eldership—the latter rising up occasionally for a score or more of years, and finally disappearing entirely as a distracting element. Slavery, however, was very soon brought into the councils of the Church; laws were passed requiring the people to emancipate their

slaves, and were soon repealed, modified and passed again. There were those in the Church who were not satisfied with the law in the Discipline and, at the risk of disturbing the peace of Zion, continued to agitate the question of slavery and advocate its suppression whether with or without law. Bishop Andrew had married a lady who owned a few slaves. The laws of Georgia did not allow him to emancipate these slaves. The Bishop's connection with slavery was made the occasion of a lengthy and acrimonious debate in the General Conference of 1844. The Northern majority, without the warrant of law, virtually deposed him from the episcopacy; the Southern delegates protested against this arbitrary proceeding in an argument of such overwhelming force that the combined strength of the Northern Church has never been able to overturn it. It soon became apparent that a division of the Church was inevitable. For this purpose a "Plan of Separation" was provided. Under this "Plan" the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was organized in Louisville, Kentucky, May, 1845, Bishops Soule and Andrew becoming its superintendents. The Plan of Separation provided for a division of the funds invested in the Book Concerns at New York and Cincinnati on the basis of the number of itinerant preachers in the two divisions, North and South. The Northern Church afterward denied the right of the Southern Church to any part of this property. The matter was finally settled by the courts, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, receiving its full *pro rata* share.

CHAPTER V.



HE scope of this work will not allow of extended accounts of the labors of the justly distinguished men who, in the face of almost superhuman difficulties, laid the foundations of Methodism in every part of the United States, many of whom survived long enough to see it established on a basis which the march of time has thus far tended to make more secure and impregnable. Asbury continued in great weakness and bodily pain to visit the Churches in every part of the connection, until worn down with disease and toil, having passed his three score and ten, he gently sank to rest, March 31, 1816. He preached his last sermon, March 24, in Richmond. From there he went to Spotsylvania, where he expired the following Sunday.

Dr. Coke, after having performed almost incredible labors for the Church, begged in his old age to be sent as a missionary to India, proposing to defray the expenses of several others whom he had selected to go with him. On the morning of the 3rd of May, 1814, while crossing the Indian Ocean, his servant knocked at his cabin-door to awaken him. Receiving no response, he opened the door and found him lying on the floor cold in death. Thus passed away one of the largest hearted, most laborious, most devout, most unselfish men Methodism has ever called into the field. Jesse Lee, the traveling companion and trusted counsellor of Asbury, having established Methodism in New England, and by his quenchless zeal and apostolic labors left an impress upon the Church which is felt even to this day, was taken from labor to rest, September 12, 1816, in the fifty-ninth year of his age. Time would fail me worthily to record the deeds of Wilbur Fisk, the first scholar of American Methodism, twice elected to the Epis-

copacy, and as often declining the honor that he might devote his great powers to the cause of education ; of Richmond Nolley, the tireless missionary who died alone in the swamps of the Mississippi ; of Martin Ruter, who wears a martyr's crown in missionary work in the wilds of Texas ; of James Axley, who continued to press the subject of temperance upon the attention of the General Conference until a rule was passed prohibiting the use of ardent spirits as a beverage ; of Peter Cartwright, the most inexplicable and one of the mightiest preachers in the ranks of Methodism ; of Edward Taylor, who though unpolished in style, yet by the force of his thought was invincible in argument before an audience of New York divines ; of Lorenzo Dow, who was a man of more than ordinary pulpit ability, and who, because of his eccentricities, made more reputation than many preachers of superior talents ; of John and William Magee, who founded camp-meetings in Tennessee in 1799 ; of James B. Finley, who was powerfully convicted at a camp-meeting in Kentucky, where he saw five hundred people swept down in a moment by the power of the Holy Ghost, and who afterward became one of the most eloquent preachers in the West, and of a host of others, whose record is in the skies. Their names are scarcely known to the Methodists of the present generation.

Of the men who were present at the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in 1784, none were living to take part in its division in 1844. Of those who acted prominent parts in this memorable drama, not many had taken a hand in laying the foundations of Methodism ; all had aided to the extent of their ability in perfecting it as a system. Not a few were there who had already achieved a national reputation. Bishop Soule, the author of the "Restrictive Rules," was there ; Nathan Bangs, who did more, possibly, toward giving Methodism a literature than any other man, was present ; Bascom, that marvel of pulpit power and

ecclesiastical statesmanship, was a delegate ; Lovick Pierce, the acknowledged leader of Methodism in the South for a half century, was there ; William Winans, the mightiest logician of them all, was there ; William A. Smith, the champion of vested right and Methodist polity, was there ; so were Olin, and Capers, and Green, and McFerrin, and Early, and Payne, and Hedding, and Morris, and Peck, and the younger Pierce, and Simpson, and Durbin, and many others, the ablest representatives of American Methodism. Such an array of talent, Methodism had never before assembled in a deliberative body. These giants met, for the last time, in a General Conference. As has been already stated, a Plan was adopted for the division of the Church, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was organized in 1845. The Methodist Episcopal Church, as it is now constituted, began its existence at the next General Conference, in 1848.

At the division of the Church, Methodism had spread throughout the United States, extending from the Northern boundary of Canada to Florida, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It had established missions in many parts of the heathen world ; its presses were printing, every week, more than one hundred thousand copies of religious periodicals of various sorts. Under its fostering care, were schools of all grades, from the Academy to the University. Its growth, in numbers, in less than a half century, was stupendous. In 1800, the minutes show sixty-four thousand nine hundred and eighty-four members, of whom thirteen thousand four hundred and fifty-two were colored, and two hundred and eighty-seven preachers. In 1844, there were one million one hundred and thirty-nine thousand five hundred and eighty-seven members, of whom one hundred and twenty-four thousand eight hundred and fifty-nine were colored, four thousand eight hundred and twenty-eight

traveling, and eight thousand one hundred and one local preachers.

Henceforward, these two Methodisms, diverging, more or less, widely at some points, yet, in evangelistic labors, more in parallel lines. Essentially one in doctrine, one in missionary spirit, one in method, the ratio of increase, year by year, in the two Churches, has been about the same. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, which has ever been, and is, to-day, the friend of the negro, through the labors of hundreds of devoted missionaries, had gathered more than two hundred thousand colored members into her communion at the beginning of the late war. After the war, through the teachings of Northern zealots, very many of them were alienated from the Church of their choice. Those who remained, asked to be gathered into a separate ecclesiastical organization. Accordingly, they were set up into an independent Church, in 1870, with the name, "Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America." This Church has had good success, numbering now something over one hundred thousand members.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, began in 1845 with four hundred and sixty thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine members, and one thousand four hundred and seventy-four traveling preachers. At the outbreak of the war this number had increased to seven hundred and fifty-four thousand four hundred and twenty-one members, and two thousand seven hundred and eighty-four preachers, or nearly sixty-four per cent. in the membership in fifteen years. During the same period, the increase in the membership of the Northern Church was nearly fifty-four per cent., such was the effect of the "great secession" in the South, and such was the happy results of fighting it in the North.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, suffered fearfully by the war, losing a larger per cent. of her members than

the Methodist Church, North. After the separation of the colored membership, she was left with 618,124 members, having already added more than 100,000 since the close of the war. In the midst of desolation and ruin, in a country devastated by war, and a population made penniless by its ravages, with no funds in the treasury, this Church has nevertheless not only regained what had been lost in numbers, but now records with gratitude, about 900,000 souls under the protection of her wing. Her colleges and academies dot the land throughout her borders. Her papers, which supply the people with a pure, religious literature, are almost as numerous as her Annual Conferences. Her Publishing House is sending forth a stream of good books, written by Southern authors, rivaling in excellence of matter and mechanical execution similar publications from other houses. She has missionaries in China, South America, Mexico, on the Mexican border and among the Indians of the United States. At the present rate of increase, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, will report 1,000,000 members on her roll at the General Conference of 1886.

As the Northern Methodist Church did not suffer from the war either in means or members as heavily as the Southern Methodist Church did, that Church has rarely failed to command the money to support a large number of missionaries in the foreign fields. Her representatives are found in well nigh every country on the globe. Besides, through her Church Extension Society, she is building at the rate of two churches a day in the United States. This is the largest denomination of Methodists, in the world, numbering 1,742,021 members, exclusive of preachers.

Quite a number of Churches in the United States and Canada are the direct offshoots of the Methodist Episcopal Church as organized in 1784. We have space merely to state in tabular form, the strength of these denominations.

	PREACHERS.	MEMBERS.
Methodist Protestant Church	1,358	119,030.
African M. E. Church		387,566.
African M. E. Zion Church		150,000.
Colored M. E. Church in America . .	1,300	125,000.
Wesleyan Methodists		20,000.
The Methodist Church	1,275	60,000.
True Methodists	170	10,000.
Primitive Methodists	45	2,800.
Other Methodist Bodies	23	9,500.

Such is a brief outline of one of the most remarkable religious movements of this or of any age. Starting from an obscure society of a half dozen souls in 1776, Episcopal Methodism has grown in numbers and influence until now it is the largest and most powerful evangelical denomination of Christians in the world. Self-praise is out of place. To God be all the glory. A thousand agencies and forces have contributed to this result. But above them all is revealed to the reader of history this unmistakable fact, namely: The most prominent, the most efficient human factor in working out this wonderful development has been the itinerant system, which, requiring its ministers to forsake all for the sake of Christ and the gospel, leaves no preacher without an appointment, and no church without a pastor. When this method of supplying the people with the word of life is abandoned, Methodism will be shorn of its strength, and its glory will have departed.

SUPPLEMENTAL STATEMENT.

I am indebted for the following statistics to the "Hand-book of Southern Methodism"—valuable compilation of facts and figures.

FOREIGN MISSIONS OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH.

II. CHINA A.

NAMES.	Entered Ministry.	Appointed Missionary.	Sailed.	Conference from which Appointed.
CHARLES TAYLOR, M. D.*	January, 1844	1846.	April, 1848	South Carolina.
BENJAMIN JENKINS, D. D.†	January, 1848	1848.	April, 1848	South Carolina.
W. G. E. CUNNINGHAM, D. D.*	October, 1844	1852.	May, 1852	Holston.
J. W. LAMBUTH, D. D.	November, 1853.	1853.	May, 1854	Mississippi.
D. C. KELLY, D. D.*	October, 1852	1853.	May, 1854	Tennessee.
J. S. BELTON†	October, 1852	1853.	May, 1854	Alabama.
Y. J. ALLEN, LL. D.	December, 1858.	1859.	December, 1859.	North Georgia.
M. L. WOOD*	November, 1855.	1859.	December, 1859.	North Carolina.
A. P. PARKER	September, 1871.	1875.	November, 1875.	Missouri.
W. R. LAMBUTH, M. D.	October, 1875.	1877.	October, 1877.	Tennessee.
C. F. REID	September, 1874.	1878.	September, 1879.	Kentucky.
W. W. ROYAL	November, 1875.	1880.	November, 1880.	Virginia.
K. R. McLAIN†	October, 1880	1880.	November, 1880.	South Georgia.
G. R. LOEHR	October, 1880	1880.	November, 1880.	North Georgia.
W. H. PARK, M. D.	•	1880.	August, 1882.	North Georgia.
D. L. ANDERSON	•	1882.	October, 1882.	North Georgia.
O. G. MINGLEDORF	December, 1881.	1882.	October, 1882.	South Georgia.
Miss M. ALLEN	•	1882.	•	Shanghai.

*Deceased. †Returned.

II. BRAZIL.

NAMES.	Entered Ministry.	Appointed Missionary.		Sailed.	Conference from which Appointed.
		1875.	1875.		
J. E. NEWMAN	January, 1846 .	1875.	1875.	December, 1875.	Brazil.
J. J. RANSOM	October, 1874 .	1875.	1875.	December, 1875.	Tennessee.
J. W. KOGER	December, 1878.	1881.	1881.	March, 1881 .	South Carolina.
J. L. KENNEDY	October, 1878 .	1881.	1881.	March, 1881 .	Holston.
J. W. TARBOUT	December, 1877.	1883.	1883.	July, 1883 .	South Carolina.

III. CENTRAL MEXICO.

J. T. DAVIS*	December, 1857.	1873.	December, 1873.	Louisiana.
W. M. PATERSON, D. D.	November, 1868.	1878.	December, 1878.	Memphis.
R. W. McDONNELL	December, 1879.	1880.	January, 1880	South Georgia.
J. W. GRIMES	November, 1879.	1880.	January, 1882	Memphis.
R. N. FREEMAN*	November, 1878.	1882.	December, 1882.	Memphis.
D. W. CARTER	October, 1871 .	1882.	December, 1882.	Holston.
JOSEPH NORWOOD	December, 1875.	1882.	January, 1883 .	West Texas.

*Deceased.

The following is a brief exhibit of the results of missionary operations in these various fields :

CHINA.—Male missionaries, 10 ; female, 1. Woman's Board of Missions has three missionaries. Stations occupied, 3 ; out stations, 8 ; communicants, 131 ; self-supporting congregations, 1 ; probationers, 60 ; Anglo-Chinese high schools, 2 ; average attendance of pupils, 300 ; contributions by pupils and patrons, \$2,600.00 ; foreign teachers, 5 ; native teachers, 9 ; Sunday-schools, 9 ; scholars, 311 ; ordained preachers, 3 ; unordained, 5 ; colportuers and helpers, 9 ; bible women, 2 ; Churches, 6 ; rented chapels, 14 ; periodicals published, 2 ; contributions of native Church, \$236.52.

BRAZIL.—Missionaries, including wives of missionaries, 6 ; of the Woman's Board, 2 ; colporteur, 1 ; Sunday-schools, 4 ; scholars, 121 ; communicants, 116.

MEXICO.—Foreign missionaries, 6 ; native preachers, 32 ; foreign teachers, 4 ; native teachers, 17 ; native members, 1,609 ; Sunday-schools, 32 ; scholars, 851 ; day schools, 17 ; scholars, 655 ; children baptized, 118 ; adults baptized, 26 ; Churches, 16 ; school houses, 10 ; parsonages, 10 ; value of Church and school property, \$42,000.00.

Besides these mission fields, there is a thriving work on the Mexican border under the superintendency of Rev. A. H. Sutherland. This work reports five missionaries of the General Board, three from the Woman's Board, twenty-five native preachers, nine hundred and forty-three Church members, and thirty-eight Sunday-schools, with eight hundred and seventeen scholars.

Reference has been made above to the Wonan's Foreign Missionary Society. This Society was organized at Atlanta

in 1878. Its growth has been wonderful. In five years it has raised nearly \$100,000.00. It supports no less than a dozen women in the mission field, besides making appropriations to school and other interests in China, Brazil and Mexico. A monthly paper is published at Nashville, with a subscription list of about ten thousand. Both the Society and the paper are invaluable to every woman who wishes to work successfully for the Master.



BISHOPS OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH.

NAMES.	Ordained Bishop.	Age when elected Bishop.	Years in the Ministry when elected Bishop.	Official Appointment held at the time of Election to the Episcopacy.	
				Pastor in Baltimore.	Pastor in Augusta, Georgia.
JOSHUA SOULE*	1824	42	25	Pastor in Baltimore.	Pastor in Augusta, Georgia.
JAMES O. ANDREW*	1832	38	19	Pastor in Columbia, South Carolina.	Pastor in Columbia, South Carolina.
WILLIAM CAPERS*	1846	56	37	President, LaGrange College, Alabama.	President, LaGrange College, Alabama.
ROBERT PINE*	1846	46	27	Editor Quarterly Review.	Editor Quarterly Review.
H. B. BASCOM*	1850	54	36	President Emory College.	President Emory College.
GEO. F. PIERCE	1854	43	23	Book Agent Methodist Episcopal Church, South.	Book Agent Methodist Episcopal Church, South.
JOHN EARLY*	1854	68	47	Pastor in Versailles, Kentucky.	Pastor in Versailles, Kentucky.
H. H. KAVANAUGH*	1854	52	30	Chancellor Southern University, Alabama.	Chancellor Southern University, Alabama.
W. M. WIGHTMAN*	1866	58	36	Pastor, in Marshall, Texas.	Pastor, in Marshall, Texas.
E. M. MARVIN,*	1866	43	24	Pastor, in Richmond, Virginia.	Pastor, in Richmond, Virginia.
D. S. DOGETT*	1866	55	37	Pastor, in Montgomery, Alabama.	Pastor, in Montgomery, Alabama.
H. N. MCTYRE	1866	41	21	Editor New Orleans Advocate.	Editor New Orleans Advocate.
J. C. KEENER*	1870	51	27	Missionary Secretary.	Missionary Secretary.
A. W. WILSON	1882	48	29	Editor New Orleans Advocate.	Editor New Orleans Advocate.
LINUS PARKER	1882	53	32	Professor Vanderbilt University.	Professor Vanderbilt University.
J. C. GRANBERRY	1882	52	33	Presiding Elder Tennessee Conference.	Presiding Elder Tennessee Conference.
R. H. HARGROVE	1882	52	24		

*Deceased.

